

## **21ST SESSION OF WHO/FAO COORDINATING COMMITTEE OF ASIA BEGINS**

**Panaji:, Sept. 23, 2019:**

The 21<sup>st</sup> session of the FAO/WHO Coordinating Committee was inaugurated at Old Goa today which is organized by the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India in collaboration with World Health Organization, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations organized

Originally being elected in July 2015 and re-elected in July 2017 by the Codex Alimentations Commission, this is the second session of the Coordinating Committee in Asia, hosting delegates from 18 member countries for a 5-day event starting from 23rd Sep – 27th September 2019.

The objective of the session is to focus on, food and safety at primary production involving issues and best practices for an evolving region; critical and emerging issues related to food safety for the region with an effort to identify focused action areas; exploring possibilities of mutual cooperation and enabling a mechanism for sharing relevant data/scientific advice with other countries for the purpose of developing regional positions and preparing/ supporting new work proposals; and developing regional standards for food products important from regional trade point of view.

In his welcome address , Shri Sunil Bakshi, Chair CCASIA and Head, Regulations FSSAI emphasized that the main objective of CCASIA is to promote mutual communication and resource sharing to develop regional standards and regulations for food products and this 5-day event will certainly help us identify a way forward to further strengthen the food safety preparedness in the region as a whole.

Smt Rita Teotia, Chairperson FSSAI during her inaugural address stated that emphasized that Asia, as a region, is perhaps, the most diverse of the Codex regions its member countries span from the most advanced countries to amongst the least; sophisticated; highly

educated and well resourced nations to countries grappling with infrastructure and health challenges. With diversity in terms of linguistic, economic and cultural dimensions, Asia, no doubt is one of the fastest growing regions in the world and shares an ancient history of robust trading relations. “Countries trade extensively with each other and at least in food, almost 60 percent of food trade is within the region. To my view, this alone is enough reason for us to develop a common ground for cooperation. She stressed upon creating a network of scientific and research institutions for collection and assimilation of scientific facts and data for the region and worthwhile, to create an IT enabled information platform to exchange information regarding food frauds and other areas of core interest”, she elaborated.

Ms Teatota also highlighted the role of capacity building initiatives between the Codex member countries in Asia. She mentioned that the countries need to pool their resources and provide support to least developed countries in the region. FAO and WHO have taken several initiatives in this direction. “On behalf of India, FSSAI is happy to offer the capacity we have built-up at the international training centre for food safety and nutrition at Mumbai for such capacity building programs”, FSSAI Chair remarked.

Ms. Sarah Cahill, Sr. Food Safety Officer, Codex, Mr Steve Wearne, Vice-Chair, Codex Alimentarius Commission ,Prof. Purwiyatno Hariyadi, Vice-Chair, Codex Alimentarius Commission, Sridhar Dharmapuri, Senior Food Safety and Nutrition Officer, Food and Agriculture Organization , Dr. Gyanendra Gongal, Technical Officer, WHO SEARO also spoke on the occasion

Also present at the inaugural ceremony were members of the food sector fraternity including the scientific community, industry and industry associations, international organizations and foreign missions, experts and government officials from Central ministries and States and other key stakeholders. Shri Rajeev Kumar Jain, Executive Director FSSAI proposed the vote of thanks.

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